

Report of the Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport

Introduction

I have been asked to report as follows for Full Council on 25 May 2023:

1. **By Councillor Hannaford as follows:**
On the current funding situation for the Dawlish line.
2. **By Councillor Connett as follows:**
Progress at South West Exeter including an update on delivery of the planned GP surgery/primary care facility and the Community Centre building.
3. **By Councillor Hodgson as follows:**
What review scrutiny is applied to the impact on wildlife and habitats of new planning developments that are likely to affect protected wildlife species, Wildlife Corridors, or other protected habitats? Questions have been raised regarding recent planning applications in Dartington which seem to have DCC Ecology approval, yet where Natural England has raised concerns that have not been responded to and in other sites where there are known Greater Horseshoe Bat pinch points.

Response

1. The current funding situation for the Dawlish line

I have pleasure in setting out the latest position regarding the South West Rail Resilience Programme, being delivered by Network Rail with Government investment of just over £170m committed to creating a more reliable, resilient railway for passengers travelling on the South Devon mainline.

Phases 1 and 2 Dawlish sea wall - £80.6m committed

The first phase of the new sea wall, running approximately 360m along Marine Parade, commenced in May 2019 and completed in July 2020. Construction of the second phase, including a 415m section between Coastguards and Colonnade breakwaters, started in November 2020 and is due for completion later in 2023. As part of these works, a new pedestrian bridge linking phases 1 and 2 of the sea wall has been delivered. The new bridge, promenade and access to the beach is currently closed but Network Rail aim to announce a date for reopening of the promenade in the coming weeks. The remaining works on Phase 2 include the Colonnade viaduct and the new seating area around the stilling basin.

A key benefit of the Phase 2 works includes improving Dawlish Station accessibility to address issues faced by disabled passengers and passengers facing mobility constraints (e.g. transporting heavy luggage or pushchairs). Platforms have been realigned to reduce the stepping distance from the trains and an accessible station

footbridge with lifts is also currently under construction. The bridge and lifts are being funded separately under Network Rail's Renewals budget and once complete, will enable the closure of the barrow crossing at the station.

Phase 3 – Parson's Tunnel North Portal rockfall shelter - £52.6m committed

This phase involves installing a new rockfall shelter at the northern end of Parson's Tunnel, between Dawlish and Holcombe and much of the work has to be done at night while trains are not running. 7,000 square metres of mesh, secured by soil nails, has been installed on the cliff face and the shelter is expected to be complete by December 2023.

Phase 4 – Dawlish to Holcombe – cliff stabilisation - £32.2m committed

This phase covers the stretch of the railway between Dawlish and the rockfall shelter works at Parson's Tunnel, near Holcombe. These works will include protective measures including netting designed to retain the cliffs in some high-risk locations, and catch fences which will stop any cliff material reaching the railway. BAM Nuttall have been awarded the contract and vegetation clearance is now under way before the main work starts later this year. The plan is for these works to be completed in July 2024 and Network Rail are currently discussing access opportunities to optimise their construction programme.

Phase 5 – Parson's Tunnel to Teignmouth - £5.3m spent to date; final scheme funding uncommitted

This final section covers approximately 1.8km section of railway between Holcombe and Teignmouth and has been amended following public feedback on the original proposal to realign the railway towards the sea. Network Rail committed to review the scheme and are proposing resilience measures that will reduce the impact on the beach. The immediate risks come from the cliffs in this location and so options to manage the cliffs without moving the railway or tackling the sea wall are currently being investigated. Further ground investigations in the area are ongoing and options include soil nailing and netting to groundwater management to improve the stability of the cliffs. Government funding has yet to be confirmed for this phase; however, Devon County Council continues to make the case for investment through discussions with South West MPs and in collaboration with other South West transport authorities and rail industry partners via the Peninsula Transport Sub National Transport Body.

Overview



- Phase 1 Dawlish Marine Parade
- Phase 2 Coastguards to Colonnade
- Phase 3 Parsons Tunnel North
- Phase 4 Dawlish to Holcombe
- Phase 5 Parsons to Teignmouth

2. Progress at South West Exeter

Infrastructure delivery at South West Exeter, funded by the Housing Infrastructure Fund, has been progressing and the benefits of this can be seen with the housing currently being built.

Two junction schemes have been delivered and the first phases of the Ridgetop Park are open to the public. In addition, two schemes are currently on site. The construction of the pedestrian/cycle bridge is progressing, with the bridge due to be lifted into place during the May half term, and works expected to be complete in the summer. The first phase of the Alphington public realm scheme is also onsite, due to be completed in June. A scheme for a signal junction at Trood Lane and improvements to Devon Hotel roundabout is concluding a tender process. We are working with the developer to be in a position to award the contract and following this, construction will commence. A planning application for the electricity substation has been submitted and officers are continuing to engage with National Grid regarding its delivery. Planning permission has been granted for a section of the spine road, with the remaining section through the Vistry site now expected to be delivered directly by the developer.

Regarding the community building and GP surgery, Ongoing discussions have been held with Exminster Parish Council, Ide Lane Surgery and the NHS to inform the

design and requirements for the building, within the funding which is available. A planning application is currently being prepared based on these discussions, which is due for submission by the end of May. Tender and construction of the building are expected to follow once planning permission is secured.

3. Review scrutiny applied to the impact on wildlife and habitats of new planning developments

The scope of DCC's scrutiny regarding planning and wildlife (both for DCC and for other local planning authorities where we have a Service Level Agreement to provide planning and wildlife advice) aligns with legislative and policy requirements and related national and local guidance. This is outlined on DCC's wildlife and planning web page at: [Wildlife and geology planning guidance - Environment \(devon.gov.uk\)](https://www.devon.gov.uk/wildlife-geology-planning-guidance-environment).

In relation to greater horseshoe bats, the input provided by DCC would accord with the South Hams Special Area of Conservation Habitats Regulations Assessment Guidance, which is available via the 'Protected Sites' tab on the DCC wildlife and planning web page linked above. This guidance was produced in association with and endorsed by Natural England.